

NOAA's E-Learning Policy

E-LEARNING@NOAA POLICY

I. BACKGROUND

It is our goal at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to train and develop our workforce and to support an organizational value of continuous learning. E-Learning@NOAA, or electronic learning, is about ensuring the organization provides training and information to students anytime, any place, at any pace. This web-based system is a shift from traditional training to a comprehensive, web-enabled, agency-wide employee development system/tool which provides information, and administers training from, E-Learning to instructor-led courses. The availability of this form of continuous learning will provide a means for NOAA employees to keep up with changes in mission, technology, and content of work, and serve to attract and retain employees for whom self-development is a priority.

E-Learning refers to education provided via the Internet or CD Rom. Conceptually, it goes beyond information dissemination, in that it has measurable objectives and expected outcomes. E-Learning formats vary widely with text only formats being the most basic. Combinations of graphics, quizzes, audio, and video components are common additions. E-Learning can be done anywhere a learner has an Internet connection and can address needs that occur any time. E-Learning is advantageous because it provides "just-in-time learning" (e.g., 20 minutes to access a specific learning objective to meet an immediate organizational/work assignment need) and is efficient, effective, and inexpensive.

The E-Learning@NOAA initiative allows for strategic development of human capital along with corporate knowledge management. While technology-based training is not intended to eliminate the need for instructor-led training, it does provide employees access to training, with supervisors' approval, when and where they choose. In addition, it provides a variety of performance support tools, such as job aids, search capability, individual development plans, self-assessment, and on-line mentoring.

Through E-Learning@NOAA, the agency will offer over 1,800 courses to NOAA employees.

II. RESPONSIBILITIES

Human Resources Management Office

The Human Resources Management Office (HRMO), in consultation and coordination with the NOAA CIO and Line/Staff Offices, will have overall responsibility for the implementation and evaluation of E-Learning@NOAA. HRMO will provide technical advice and assistance on the regulatory, policy and procedural requirements of the E-Learning@NOAA program. E-Learning materials and resources will be available in alternate formats for employees with disabilities.

Line/Staff Office Director

Line/Staff Office Directors will ensure that managers and supervisors understand the purpose and capabilities of E-Learning@NOAA courseware and how to utilize it in accordance with this policy. The Director will review learning and developmental assessments, and other relevant factors to determine overall training needs of their office/organization.

First Line Supervisor/Manager

In accordance with the training needs of their organization and staff, managers, and supervisors will work with staff to meaningfully participate in the E-Learning@NOAA courseware, allow adequate duty time for study, and ensure that employees adhere to this policy (see below) for training during duty hours. Managers and supervisors are responsible for using this learning and developmental tool to meet individual employee and office/organizational needs. Supervisors will identify the most appropriate e-learning solution for specific learning problems and one that meets the needs of the employee and organization. Managers and supervisors are responsible for approving in advance all E-Learning@NOAA courses taken while on duty, ensuring the appropriate balance between mission accomplishment and employee development. Supervisors and managers do not need to approve periodic just-in-time learning (e.g., one 20 minute access of a specific learning objective during the course of a week to meet an immediate organizational/work assignment need.) Supervisors should understand that to achieve success with E-Learning@NOAA, a joint commitment should be made by the supervisor and employee to successfully complete the training. Managers and supervisors will continue to be responsible for approving outside training if E-Learning@NOAA does not provide the necessary course work. Managers and supervisors are responsible for obtaining reports of usage through the system for their own purposes.

NOAA Employee

NOAA employees are responsible for adhering to the policy established for use of the E-Learning@NOAA courseware. Employees must obtain approval from their supervisor prior to take courses on E-Learning@NOAA during duty hours except for periodic just-in-time learning as noted in the first line supervisor/manager section above.

III. POLICY

Training Approval Process

Employees must obtain supervisory approval prior to taking an E-Learning@NOAA training course(s) during work hours with the exception of just-in-time learning (e.g., one 20 minute access of a specific learning objective during the course of a week to meet an immediate organizational/work assignment need.). This ensures training activities during work hours are based on individual and organizational needs, and that the training is documented and performed during a time that will not disrupt priority work assignments.

Access During Tour of Duty

When courses are approved by a supervisor, a reasonable threshold should be established by the supervisor for use of the E-Learning@NOAA training system during the regular tour of duty. Supervisors should determine an appropriate schedule which allows the employee to take a course (s) of study at the work site or another location within the office without interruption, and does not disrupt the normal functioning of the office. This policy is also applicable to employees who are telecommuting from an alternative work site.

Training During Non-Duty Hours

E-Learning@NOAA courseware is available for access via the Internet 24 hours per day, 7 days a week; therefore, employees of organizations participating in E-Learning@NOAA may use the courseware wherever they have a computer with access to the internet. Subject to supervisory approval, there are no restrictions on the use of the computer equipment at the employee's work station, telecommuting location or any specific E-Learning@NOAA training site that may be established by the organization for e-training purposes beyond the employee's tour of duty. There is no limitation on usage when employees are not in a duty status, however, employees may not be required to participate in E-Learning beyond their regular tour of duty.

Compensation for Training Beyond Tour of Duty

NOAA employees will not be compensated through compensatory time, overtime, or credit hours for participating in training beyond their regular tour of duty.